

- (ii) Non-availability of infrastructural facilities right upto the grass root level including training areas, standard sports equipment etc.;
- (iii) Inadequate monetary resources; and
- (iv) Lack of integration of Physical Education and sports with educational curriculum.

(c) The measures proposed to be taken for broadbasing of sports activities to bring a sense of national pride include : effective integration of sports and games with the educational curriculum; particular emphasis on promotion of sporting activities in rural areas and on creation of sports infrastructure throughout the country; and a set of various incentives and awards to sports-persons who win medals at the International level.

[Translation]

Visit by Cyprus President

*218. SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM :
SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJ BHAI
CHIKHALIA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the President of Cyprus had visited India recently;
- (b) if so, the details of talks held between him and Indian leaders regarding trade and economic matters; and
- (c) the extent to which relations are likely to be strengthened between India and Cyprus as a result of this visit?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Yes Sir, The President of Cyprus, Mr. Glafcos Clerides visited India from 10-15 February, 1997.

(b) The talks between President Clerides and Indian leaders were wide-ranging, encompassing different aspects of Indo-Cypriot relations as well as cooperation between the two countries in the multilateral arena. The talks covered, inter alia, a number of political issues, including those of special interest to either side. It also afforded an opportunity to our two countries to build on the traditionally close political ties between us by deepening our economic relations. Recognising the opportunities ahead for increasing Indo-Cypriot trade and economic co-operation, President Clerides brought with him a business delegation from Cyprus. Discussions were held on ways that Indian companies could expand business relations with Cyprus in the context of the latter's impending admission into the European Union. During the visit an agreement was signed between the Cypriot Foreign Minister and our Minister of Surface Transport on Maritime cooperation.

(c) The visit of the Cypriot President has strengthened bilateral ties between India and Cyprus by re-enforcing a traditionally close relationship. The two sides reiterated their traditional support to each other on bilateral and multilateral issues of particular importance to either country, including the question of permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The visit of President Clerides also provided an opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to NAM. In this context the Cypriot Foreign Minister confirmed that he would attend the NAM Ministerial Conference in New Delhi next month. The visit also paved the way for a closer economic partnership which will be particularly useful as Cyprus moves towards joining the European Union. Our future ties should be considerably enhanced by the role Cyprus can play as a gateway for expanding India's economic relations with Europe.

[English]

Tolls on National Highways/Bypasses and Bridges

*219. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE :
SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

- (a) whether there is a proposal under consideration of the Government to levy tolls on national highways, bypasses and bridges;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the amount likely to accrue to the Government annually on account of this toll tax; and
- (d) the justification and reasons for levying such a toll tax by the Union Government?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to levy toll on improved 4 lane sections of National Highways, bypasses and bridges.

(c) As the toll will be fixed considering the cost of facility, savings to the user and the period of concession, it will vary from case to case. It is, therefore, not possible to give the accrual annually.

(d) As improvements to the National Highways would result in substantial savings to the road user, a part of such savings will be collected as toll.

Financial Assistance to Private Hospitals

*220. CHAUDHARY RAMCHANDRA BENDA : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government have provided any financial assistance to certain private hospitals; and